

News Release



**Office of Public Affairs
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240
202/208 5634 Fax: 202/219 2428**

September 8, 2004

Contact: Nicholas Throckmorton, 202/208-5636

Norton Announces Funding for Wetlands Projects, Additions to National Wildlife Refuges

Interior Secretary Gale Norton announced today that the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission approved more than \$27 million for wetland habitat conservation in the United States and Canada to benefit migratory birds and other wildlife. At the same time, the Commission also approved the acquisition of nearly 16,000 acres of important migratory bird habitat to be added to units in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The Commission's action will provide funding to states and other partners through the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) to conserve habitat for migratory birds. Also, the Commission used money from the sale of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, the Duck Stamp, to purchase key tracts of land for the Service's National Wildlife Refuge System in six states.

"We are working to make good on President Bush's goal of restoring, enhancing and protecting 3 million acres of wetlands over the next five years," said Secretary Gale Norton, who chairs the Commission. "With this round of NAWCA proposals, we are set to restore nearly 22,000 acres, enhance nearly 89,000 acres, and protect more than 217,000 acres of wetlands around the nation."

"President Bush's support for wetlands conservation was clearly evident when he approved the reauthorization of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act, renewing that commitment and supporting increased funding through this outstanding public-private partnership program. Wetlands provide excellent habitat for wildlife, and provide millions of Americans with a broad range of outdoor recreational opportunities."

Working with Partners to Conserve Wetlands

The NAWCA Standard Grants Program will fund 22 projects in 13 states for more than \$20.5 million to protect or restore more than 1.1 million acres of wetlands and associated upland habitats. Project partners will contribute up to \$150 million. A list of grants appears at the end of this release.

Since 1990, more than 2,000 partners have been involved in more than 1,000 projects made possible through the Standard Grant Program. Canadian, Mexican and U.S. partners focus on protecting, restoring, and enhancing wetland habitat. Project partners must minimally match the grant request at a one-to-one ratio. More than \$600 million has been invested through the Act and total partner contributions exceed \$1.7 billion. More than 22 million acres of wetlands and associated uplands have been affected across the continent.

The Commission also approved more than \$6.4 million in funding for 13 projects in Canada. Partners there are adding more than \$15.4 million to conserve 98,000 acres of wetlands.

"Since many of North America's waterfowl species are dependent on breeding habitat in Canada it is important that we use our NAWCA funds to conserve habitat there as well," said Service Director Steve Williams. "All of this work with partners will help us continue to improve habitat conditions and promote solution oriented conservation of migratory birds and other wildlife for future generations."

Funding for this program comes from Congressional appropriations, funds collected from fines, penalties, and forfeitures under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, interest accrued to the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act, and from excise taxes paid on small engine fuels through Wallop-Breaux Amendments to the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act.

Federal Duck Stamp Revenues for Conservation

The Commission approved more than \$15.5 million in Federal Duck Stamp funds to acquire land for the National Wildlife Refuge System. All acquisitions were previously approved by the affected states.

"Sportsmen and women have contributed a great deal to the development of the National Wildlife Refuge System," Norton said. "Money raised by the sale of Federal Duck Stamps pays for this land acquisition. Since the first Duck Stamp sale in 1934, nearly \$700 million has been raised to purchase more than five million acres of wetlands for the refuge system."

New National Wildlife Refuge System acquisitions approved by the Conservation Commission are:

Louisiana: Acquisition of 1,082 acres to provide habitat for waterfowl within the boundaries of Red River National Wildlife Refuge.

Louisiana: Acquisition of 10,948 acres to protect bottomland hardwood forest for migratory waterfowl within the boundaries of Tensas River National Wildlife Refuge.

Maine/New Hampshire: Acquisition of 1,073 acres to protect wetlands for waterfowl within the boundaries of Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge.

Maine: Acquisition of 34 acres to provide breeding habitat for waterfowl within the boundaries of Rachel Carson National Wildlife Refuge.

New Jersey: Acquisition of 28 acres to protect wintering and nesting waterfowl habitat within the boundaries of Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge.

New Jersey: Acquisition of 92 acres to conserve wetland habitat within the boundaries of Wallkill National Wildlife Refuge.

New Hampshire: Acquisition of 622 acres to provide habitat for waterfowl within the boundaries of Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

Texas: Acquisition of 1,681 acres to provide habitat for waterfowl within the boundaries of San Bernard National Wildlife Refuge.

Texas: Acquisition of 255 acres to provide habitat for wintering waterfowl within the boundaries of Trinity River National Wildlife Refuge.

West Virginia: Acquisition of 486 acres to conserve wetland habitats within the boundaries of Canaan Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

The Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929 established the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission to approve land to be purchased for the National Wildlife Refuge System with monies

from the Migratory Bird Conservation Fund. The fund is supported by revenue collected from Federal Duck Stamp sales, import duties collected on arms and ammunition, right-of-way payments to the refuge system, and receipts from national wildlife refuge entry fees. For more information about the Federal Duck Stamp program please visit <<http://duckstamps.fws.gov>>.

The Commission meets three times a year to approve funding proposals. Permanent Commission members are Interior Secretary Norton, Senators Thad Cochran and John Breaux; Representatives John Dingell and Curt Weldon; Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman; and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Mike Leavitt.

Description of approved NAWCA projects include:

- The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and seven partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$45 million for a project called Bonneau Ferry to conserve nearly 12,000 acres of wetlands near the Cooper River.
- The Service and 18 partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$1.6 million for a project called Chase Lake Area Wetland Phase VI Project to protect wetlands in North Dakota.
- Ducks Unlimited and nine partners will receive nearly \$1 million and contribute up to \$7 million for a project called Chenier Plain Coastal Wetlands Conservation Phase II to conserve nearly 11,000 acres of wetlands in Louisiana and Texas.
- The New England Forestry Foundation and partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$24 million for a project called Downeast Lakes Forestry Partnership to conserve nearly 440,000 acres of wetlands in Maine.
- The Lake Heritage Parks Foundation and 19 partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$4 million for a project called Grand Kankakee Marsh Restoration Phase IV Project to conserve nearly 1,600 acres of wetlands in Indiana.
- The Service and nine partners will receive \$650,000 and contribute up to \$1.3 million for a project called Greater Pleasant Bay Project Area to conserve nearly 762 acres of wetlands in Maine.
- The Service and five partners will receive more than \$765,000 and contribute up to \$2.1 million for a project called Hanson Marsh Hydrologic Restoration to conserve more than 45,000 acres of wetlands in Louisiana.
- The Conservation Fund and the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation will receive \$750,000 contribute up to \$1.5 million for a project called Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Complex Phase III to conserve more than 18,000 acres of wetlands in Alaska.
- Ducks Unlimited and 12 partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$1.7 million for the Lake County Closed Basin Project to conserve more than 5,000 acres of wetlands in Oregon.
- The Nature Conservancy and five partners will receive nearly \$996,000 and contribute up to \$3.5 million for a project called Lower Mississippi Valley Priority Sites Phase I to conserve nearly 9,000 acres of wetlands in Louisiana.
- The Maine Department of Conservation and four partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$29 million for the Maine Forest Ecosystem Project to conserve more than 476,000 acres of wetlands in Maine.
- The Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and three partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$2.3 million for a project called Manchac Wildlife Management Area Prairie Shoreline Protection to conserve nearly 71,000 acres of wetlands in Louisiana.
- The State of Louisiana and two partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$3.1 million for a project called Maurepas/Pontchartrain Habitat Conservation Effort Phase I to conserve 7,000 acres of wetlands.
- Ducks Unlimited and seven partners will receive more than \$646,000 and contribute up to \$1.3

million for a project called McPherson Valley Wetlands Phase V to conserve 325 acres of wetlands in Kansas.

- Ducks Unlimited and eight partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$2 million for a project called Minnesota Marshes Phase I, to conserve more than 4,500 acres of wetlands.
- The North Dakota Natural Resources Trust and 15 partners will receive nearly \$775,000 and contribute up to \$2.1 million for a project called Missouri/Yellowstone River Confluence Land Acquisition to conserve more than 1,500 acres of wetlands in North Dakota.
- Pheasants Forever and seven partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$4.5 million for a project called Prairie Wetland Heritage Conservation Initiative Phase III to conserve more than 9,300 acres of wetlands in Minnesota.
- The Service, American Electric Power and The Conservation Fund will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$2.2 million for a project called Restoration and Expansion of Catahoula National Wildlife Refuge I, to conserve more than 6,400 acres of wetlands in Louisiana.
- Ducks Unlimited and six partners will receive more than \$998,000 and contribute up to \$2 million for a project called Southeast Wisconsin Coastal Habitat Initiative Phase IV, to conserve more than 2,000 acres of wetlands.
- The Little Traverse Conservancy and six partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$4.7 million for a project called St. Mary's River Bird Migration Corridor Phase II, to conserve more than 1,400 acres of wetlands in Michigan.
- The Suisun Resource Conservation District and seven partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$2.2 million for a project called Suisun Marsh Managed Wetlands Enhancement Project to conserve nearly 25,000 acres of wetlands in California.
- Ducks Unlimited and 18 partners will receive \$1 million and contribute up to \$2.6 million for a project called Winnebago System – Rush Lake Initiative to conserve more than 6,000 acres of wetlands in Wisconsin.

For summaries of funded U.S. Standard Grant projects, please see

<http://birdhabitat.fws.gov/NAWCA/projects/USprojects/standardgrants090804/USstandardgrantsprojects.html>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at <http://www.fws.gov>.